

A Special Torah Visits Sha'ar Zahav

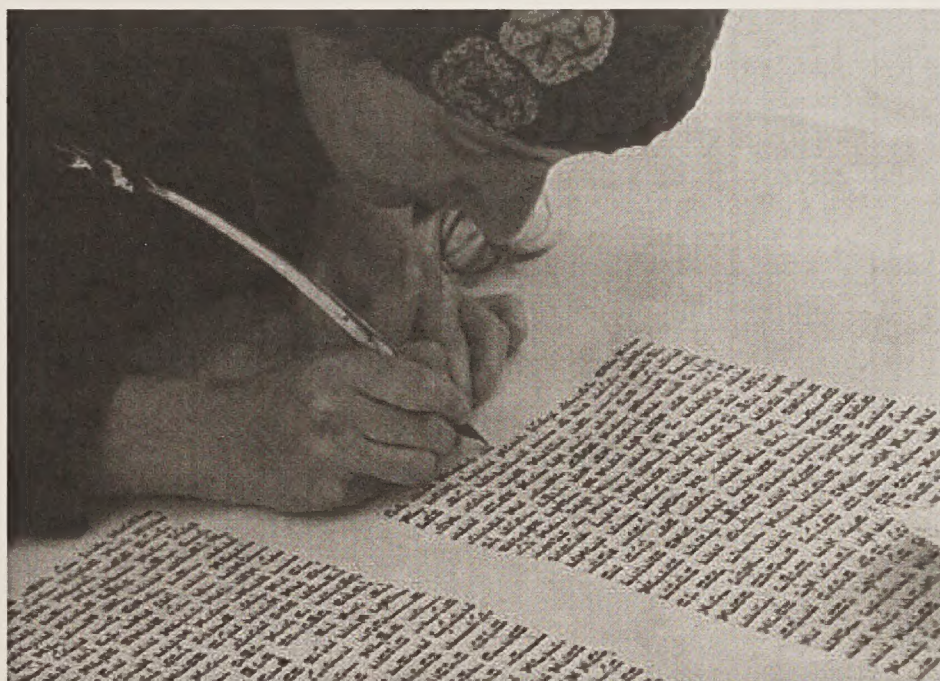
BY KAREN SCHILLER

From October 14 through November 14, 2013, Sha'ar Zahav will host a special Torah, completely handwritten by Julie Seltzer, a female soferet (scribe). The Torah was commissioned by the Contemporary Jewish Museum (CJM) in 2009 and is traveling to Jewish communities in the San Francisco Bay Area before serving congregations in need around the world.

Rabbi Angel said, "This sefer Torah is among the first female-inscribed scrolls in Jewish history. To be able to read and chant and teach from this Torah is a special once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. In our community, where we have made egalitarianism a Jewish value, we've been creating egalitarian leadership structures, new prayer and ritual, to match this ideal. A female-inscribed Torah is a powerful reminder to our community that anything is possible."

Seltzer scribed the Torah as part of CJM's exhibit "As it is Written: Project 304,805." During the exhibit, Seltzer worked in a public space so that visitors could watch her process. For most people, this was the first time they had watched a Torah being inscribed. For visitors who perhaps grew up at a time when women weren't allowed to fully participate in Jewish life and ritual, or who were or are members of communities where women still aren't allowed to touch or read from the Torah, seeing Seltzer bent over the Torah, quill in hand, was a revelation, the ending of a final taboo.

The exhibit opened with an installation by Israeli artist Dov Abramson: a list of the 613 mitzvot (commandments) in the Torah, which he annotated using skirts to indicate which mitzvot applied to women and which to men. Seltzer wrote in her blog about entering the exhibit through this installation and added, "On the holiday of Shavuot a few years ago, I found myself reading this very list with others from 1 am until dawn. There is a tradition of staying up all night studying Torah, and what could bring us back to the source better than learning the 613 mitzvot? We went around in a circle and read each one out loud. I'll never forget two of the mitzvot that landed on me: 1) To take challah; 2) To write a sefer Torah.



Taking challah is one of the only mitzvot that applies specifically to women. I was working at the time as a baker and fulfilled this mitzvah almost daily. ... As for writing a sefer Torah, I'd already begun to learn scribal arts so the idea that I might someday write a Torah was not *totally* inconceivable, though it certainly seemed far-fetched. A girl can dream, can't she?"

Of course, the Torah that Seltzer scribed is no different than any other Torah, which, Seltzer says, is one of the things that make a Torah and the work of scribing a Torah so special. "There's really nothing different about the Torah that I would create now versus 2000 years ago in terms of the words and the letters," she said. "And that's part of what's amazing about this work, that I'm writing the same words as has been written for this many years.

At Sha'ar Zahav, the CJM Torah will first be read on Saturday, October 19th at Eliana Gerson's bat mitzvah. Our religious school, Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer, is planning to use it during their Celebration of Learning on October 26th, and Cantor Bernstein is planning a special Exploration service that will look at the Torah. In addition, we will read from the Torah at other services during the month it is with us.

For more information about the process of creating the Torah and information about the tour, visit <http://www.thecjm.org/education/torah-tour>.

May You Be Renewed



THE HIGH Holidays are a time ripe with meaning and potential, focused on the year ahead—the bountifulness of life before us. In the days surrounding Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, a season of renewal and even rebirth, we are—and this is both comforting and frightening—called to ask ourselves all the old questions. Who is this person that I am? What am I doing with the one life I've been given? How have I missed the mark?

How will we as individuals and as a community respond to the challenge to engage in *cheshbon hanefesh* (an account of the soul)? Who among us is brave enough to look inside and ask the hard questions: How can I change? How can I make living amends, a meaningful *teshuvah* (repentance)? And where will I seek help in making these changes? How can we as a *kehilla kedusha* (holy community) support and nourish each other in growing along spiritual lines?

The classic Jewish law code, the *Shulchan Aruch*, describes life as “the amassing of hundreds of thousands of hours.” During these *Yamim Noraim*, these Days of Awe, and in the awesome days and months ahead, what will we do differently with our own “hundreds of thousands of hours”?

Perhaps this year you will feel called to offer some of those hours to your Sha'ar Zahav community. Investing in our vision cultivates a sense of belonging.

The word “belong” may have two different meanings: first and foremost, *to belong* is to be related to and a part of something. It is membership, the experience of being at home in the broadest sense of the phrase. It is the opposite of thinking that wherever I am, I would be better off somewhere else. The opposite of belonging is to feel isolated, always (all ways) on the margin, an outsider. *To belong is to know, even in the middle of the night, that I am among friends.*

As Jews, each one of us needs to be a part of ensuring community. Hermits and monasteries are noticeably absent from Jewish history; we are a communal people, with all the fabulously complicated and diverse relationships community entails.

A Jew simply cannot fulfill the primary religious acts in

isolation. Doing primary religious acts is a way we have of growing as Jews. There are three ancient kinds of primary Jewish acts: communal prayer, holy study and good deeds, or in the classical language of Pirke Avot, Torah, Avodah, and G'milut Hasadim.

How can we increase the amount of “belonging” or relatedness that people experience (that exists) in this community? Come, join us in joyful prayer, holy study and acts of *tikun olam*. And together may we find the blessing that others have found, the many who have been a part of this sacred project for most, if not all of its 36 years.

Titchadshu! May you be renewed!
Rabbi Camille

Please Be in Touch With Me

I am eager to be in touch with all members of the CSZ family whenever there are occasions of joy or sadness in your lives. Where there is a death in the family, please call me as soon as possible. We very much want to be there with you at a time of grief.

Rabbi Camille Shira Angel

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Congregation Sha'ar Zahav is a member of the Union for Reform Judaism, the World Congress of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Jews, and the San Francisco Organizing Project



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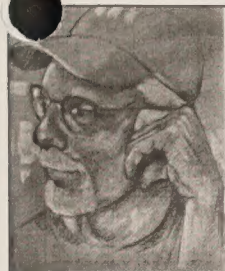
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The Importance of Community

James Carlson President



AT THE Leadership Advance in July, we devoted one session to an interesting exercise. The exercise called for us to individually review the values statements developed during the Strategic Planning process. The goal was for everyone to choose one particular value and think of an example or instance when that value came into play. Then we paired off and talked about those value-based stories. In concluding the exercise, several people told their stories to the entire group.

The stories focused on different values from among the dozen of which people could choose. Some of the stories were about having received support during a difficult time. Others were about the experience of participating in a mitzvah. One story was about the unique foundation for life that the children in Congregation Sha'ar Zahav receive. All the stories were heart-touching.

As these stories about our values played back in my head, I came to realize that they had one central theme. While the specific values chosen for discussion were very different, a common thread ran through them. That thread was the importance of being connected in one's community.

For me, the exercise crystallized the theme of community more deeply than ever before. I realized how many different ways the congregation is intertwined in our lives and how many different roles our community plays.

I also remembered how surprised I was 18 years ago to find a community at CSZ. On my journey to Judaism, I did not anticipate becoming part of a community—The concept did not cross my mind. Taking classes at the JCC, learning Hebrew, figuring out the choreography of prayers, trying to absorb the spirituality of services... those were clear concepts in my mind. Finding a home in a new community wasn't something I had thought about. I had no idea that a community not only came with the package, but was the sweetest part of it.

Eighteen years later, I guess it's clear to me now. Being a member at Sha'ar Zahav isn't about membership; it's about being connected to people and participating as part of a community. There are communal responsibilities and communal

joys. There are lofty goals that can only be achieved by people working together. There are shared values and shared understanding that we may not have the same points of view on any given subject. The spiritual community we share is both the icing and the cake.

You are missing your piece of cake if you're not participating in the fullness of membership. If you are not part of a chavurah that speaks to your interests, or if you're not serving on a committee that taps into your talents, we have many ways to fix that problem. Please be in touch with me or with Rabbi Angel to sign up for your piece of Sha'ar Zahav's special cake!

Chavurah Hatchery
A Place Where Our Community Comes to Roost Brought to you by the Keshet Gang (the Connections Task Force of the CSZ Strategic Plan)

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2-4 PM

A *chavurah* is a group of Sha'ar Zahav members with shared interests who meet on a regular basis for conversation, activity, food, and fun. On Sunday, October 20th, you will have the chance to find or create the chavurah of your dreams at Sha'ar Zahav's first "Chavurah Hatchery." Watch the weekly email for more information.

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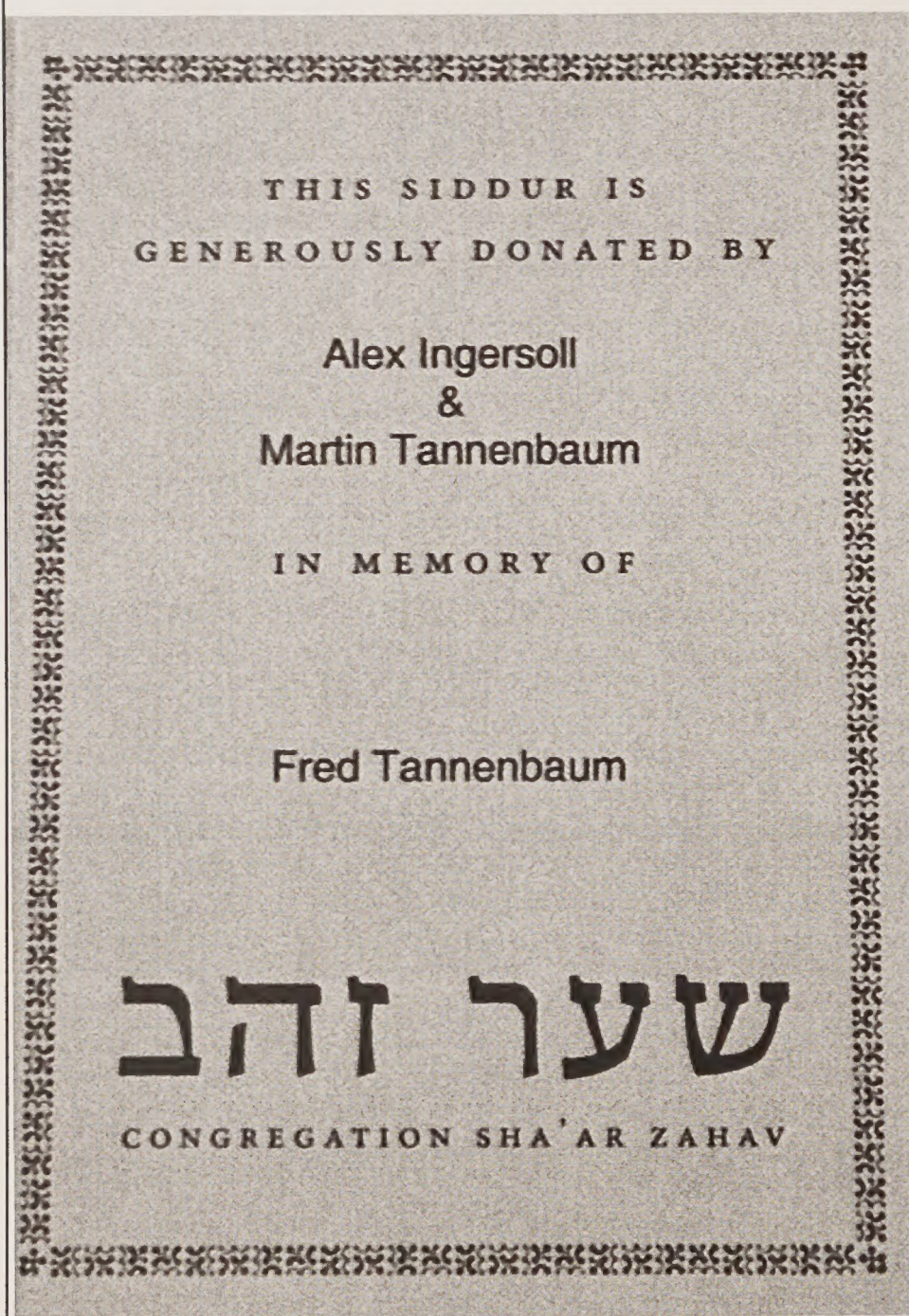
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Bookplates Trigger Memories



BY ALEX INGERSOLL

T rue Confession: When I'm in shul, I always open my siddur to see if there's a bookplate. Sometimes, I'll even exchange one for another if the first one doesn't have a bookplate. It may be a bookplate which Martin and I have given – which affords a rush of memory of the person or the occasion which prompted that dedication. Sometimes, it will be a bookplate given by a friend – or in honor of that friend – and both the people and the occasion are familiar. In that case, I enjoy sharing with that person the thoughts that flash of recognition evoked. Equally interesting though is a bookplate which may involve someone at the shul I know, but the occasion and/or the other person is a

mystery. That situation always prompts a question – such as: “The bookplate in my siddur was given by you in celebration of Rabbi Reuben Zellman. I didn't know you knew him? Is there a story?”

Some history: When I celebrated my Bar Mitzvah last year, my drash was based on my reading of Parshat Terumah – which describes the building of the first tabernacle and starts with Moses exhorting the Israelites to give: Specially, that every person “whose heart is so moved” should make a gift. After the service, my mother-in-law, Irene Tannenbaum, commented that my drash was the first bar mitzvah drash she recalled which started with a similar pitch. I indeed urged everyone to give – but in this case by buying bookplates for our siddurim. Clearly, as an adult bar mitzvah, I wasn't hoping for fountain pens or angling for a college tuition fund, but I did hope for contributions to my synagogue. But why bookplates?

I grew up with names. My family's favored pew in the Dutch Reformed Church in Glen, New York, was directly in front of a stained glass window which earlier members of my family had underwritten. A portion of the glass identified us in Old English script. Here I was celebrating my Bar Mitzvah at age 65 – and I knew that Jews certainly don't shy from dedications. Even at Sha'ar Zahav, we've come to value the importance of recognition for donors. For me, though, there's something significant about bookplates.

When Rabbi Angel arrived in 2000, she taught us from the start about the importance of stories, personal stories, stories which not only relate some history, but most importantly describe relationships. And relationships are truly the fabric of community.

My obsession with bookplates is as simple as that. For the relatively modest sum of \$54 anyone can memorialize, celebrate or honor someone – in a relatively lasting matter. And provide the tantalizing hint of a story.

Of course, one can also provide the same instant hints at relationship by sponsoring flowers, an oneg, making a donation to the general fund, or any of our more directed funds – and dedicate that gift. As I said during my drash: “I'm not expecting a sea of bookplates in honor of MY bar mitzvah. But I am hoping for donations in honor of the bar or bat mitzvah of someone else dear to you – past or present, in celebration of any number of simchas, or in memory of a loved one.” Let your imagination soar – you not only get to support our shul, but in the process create an opening for a story: A story involving a relationship, an appreciation, a memory – which can be shared with others in our community. And stories and relationships are the threads of community.

Annual Meeting Remembrance

BY ROB TAT

(Editor's note: This article is excerpted from a remembrance of synagogue co-founder Bernard Pechter, delivered by Robert Tat at this year's annual meeting in May.)

Bernard Pechter was a “larger than life character.” He was a stockbroker by profession, a major contributor to the arts, an early gay activist, and a supporter of many social causes.

Bernard was born in Chicago in 1935 and came to San Francisco in 1959. I remember that he traveled in high society circles, and seemed to know everyone. A friend recalled “Bernard seemed to have about 15,000 groups of friends.” Others remember him as an “irresistible raconteur,” an apt description. My most vivid impression of Bernard was that he was a person who got things done. He always had a cause he was championing.

Paul Cohen, who knew Bernard in the Sixties, describes him as “a larger than life character” with “grandiose ideas and schemes.” And notably Paul observed: Bernard was an openly gay man at a time when many of his contemporaries were not.

One of Bernard’s “grandiose ideas” was to found a gay synagogue in San Francisco. Indeed, the story of how Sha’ar Zahav was founded tells us a lot about Bernard the person. In the mid-1970s only two gay synagogues existed. Bernard invited Daniel Chesir to lunch at the Concordia Club and over lunch he proposed the idea of a San Francisco gay synagogue. Now Bernard identified culturally as Jewish, but he was not an observant Jew. So it was not that he was looking for a place to pray. He just thought San Francisco should have a gay shul. Daniel agreed to handle the ritual for the first year, and so Sha’ar Zahav was established.

Through one of his 15,000 circles of friends Bernard arranged for the synagogue to meet in a basement room at Glide church. Daniel remembers that Bernard then placed an advertisement in Trader Dicks, the personals section of the

Advocate newspaper, announcing the synagogue was forming. At the first service, held the Shabbat after July 4 in 1977, that there were about 30 people present, all men. As Daniel pointed out, women did not read the Trader Dicks personals.

A few weeks later Bernard gave his buddy Herb Caen an item for his popular daily column in the Chronicle. It went something like this: now San Francisco has everything; we even have a gay synagogue. I read that item in Herb Caen and that’s how I first came to the synagogue.

Ron Lezell remembers a CSZ social event from those days. The weekend of Gay Freedom Day Bernard would throw a pool party on the top of Mount Tam at a home he referred to as a “house of architectural distinction.” This was a very Bernard phrase! It was a house with pool he rented each summer to entertain his friends.

Daniel recalls that after a couple of years Bernard pulled back. The synagogue was a going concern, and he felt his work was done. He was never interested in running the synagogue, only in starting it. That was Bernard: see something that needed to be done and do it. Bernard stayed a part of the CSZ community for the rest of his life, but always in the background.

Bernard Pechter passed away in 1999 at the age of 63 from a long illness, a sad ending to an active and vital life. His memorial plaque in the back of our sanctuary reads: “Bernard Pechter: Founder and Force of Nature.”

May his memory be for a blessing.



A Warm Sabbatical Experience

BY AYA BETENSKY AND ROBERT KRAUT

When we moved to Noe Valley in January for a five-month sabbatical, we decided to go to the neighborhood shul: Sha'ar Zahav. It was a short ride on the J train or a 20-minute walk from our apartment which allowed us a gorgeous view of the Bay once we had trudged up to the crest of Dolores. Back home in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, we are faithful members of an informal Saturday morning minyan at Temple Sinai, and Aya is a long-time member of our choir. So we enjoyed CSZ's morning minyan (not totally faithfully, because of travel and the seductions of the 24th St. Farmer's Market), and Aya joined the Shabbes Beat chorus.

We found that we really loved the way Cantor Sharon led Shabbes Beat services, with a combination of pizzazz, inspiration and beautiful singing that closed out the week and brought in the joy of Shabbat. We liked the tradition of everyone touching the challah through someone else in an unbroken chain. We liked singing both new songs and familiar ones (with the variations that differentiate one synagogue from another but basically from the same songbook).

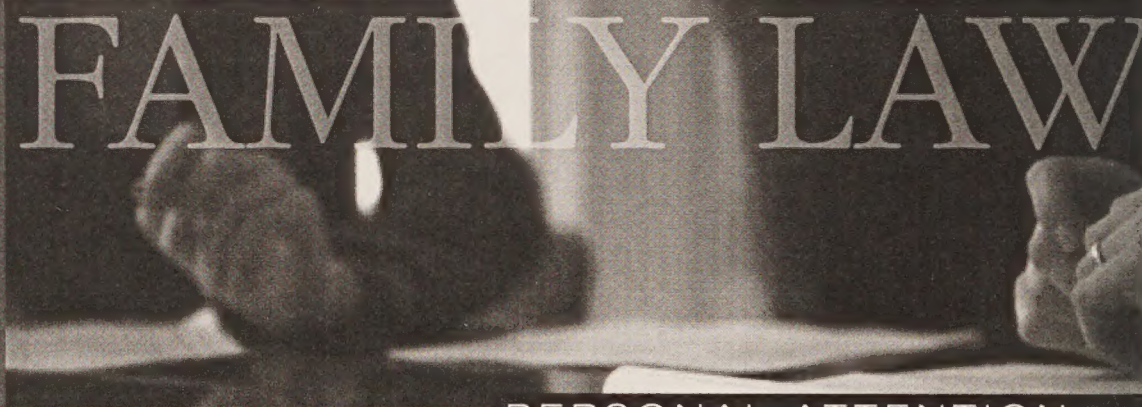
We appreciated the great extent to which members of the community led services and were moved to learn about the

history of the congregation and witness the life-cycle events of gay families and the great variety of their ethnicities and backgrounds. (Yes, we have all of that in Pittsburgh, too, but at CSZ it seems so much more the norm.) It was a lovely experience and while we looked forward to coming home, we were also sad to leave. We thank the congregation for welcoming us and look forward to our return.

**For the only time in our lives,
the holiday of HANUKKAH will
coincide with THANKSGIVING
on Thursday, November 28th.
We will be adding the lighting of
the 2nd candle to our festivities.**

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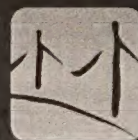
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- Prayer Minyan with Cantor Sharon Bernstein
- Expanded madrichim program
- A new teacher training program

Please check on our website at the Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer brochure for more details

Let me share a little about our wonderful faculty:

Noa Grayevsky-Ge'avah Teacher-K/1

Noa has been passionate about social justice and Judaism for as long as she can remember. After she graduated from Harvard University she realized that though these two parts of her life were expressed in different communities, they exist inextricably within her. She started searching for and nourishing communities that live and breathe Judaism, queer-ness, and justice. She worked as the Director of Community Organizing at Progressive Jewish Alliance in the Bay Area. Committed to Jewish education and youth empowerment, she has worked with young folks locally at several synagogue schools. Her courses range from Shabbas with Savta (a Jewish cooking class with a zany granny from a different place and time) to Team Justice (a Jewishly rooted class about collective liberation taught through engagement with local social justice movements).

Martin Rawlings-Fein-Kehilla Teacher 4/5

Martin has studied at Hebrew College in Boston, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and the Alliance for Jewish Renewal (ALEPH) Beit Midrash. As an out bisexual trans man, he is a queer community documentarian and filmmaker. He contributed to the 2011 Lambda Literary Award winning anthology "Balancing on the Mechitza: Transgender in Jewish Community," and writes a column for the Examiner.com about SF Judaism and LGBT Issues. He is currently the Kehilla teacher at Congregation Sha'ar Zahav's Religious School—Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer, where he expands young minds and teaches Jewish studies to 4th and 5th graders through multiple learning modalities. He emphasizes Jewish feminism and pluralism.

Ro Seidelman-Kadimah Teacher 6/7

Ro is a graduate of Wesleyan University. Ro organizes his queer community around economic and racial justice, makes giant puppets with children and loves to cook large meals for their friends. Ro has taught at Temple Sinai of Oakland.

Ila Cherney-Master Teacher/Teacher Float. Hebrew Teacher

Ila has been on the faculty of CSZ for more than 20 years. She has been involved in Jewish education in Chicago and San Francisco and in Jewish professional life at the Jewish National Fund in Jerusalem during her eight years in Israel, she served as a synagogue executive director in New York and San Francisco and most recently as a recreation coordinator at the Jewish Home in San Francisco. She has served the Jewish Community in some capacity for the better part of the past fifty years.

(continued on page 9)

Introducing the Bat Mitzvah

Eliana Gershon



Eliana Gershon is a 7th grader at Tehiyah Day School and has attended Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer since kindergarten. She will be called to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah on October 19, 2013. Eliana has many inter-

ests including reading fantasy fiction, writing stories, and performing in musical theater. She has been in six musicals over the past several years and hopes to do more this coming year. Her goal is to one day live in New York and be in a Broadway production. She also loves cross country running and basketball.

Eliana is a compassionate and loving friend and has served on the student council at Tehiya.

Eliana and her mother, Tamar Gershon, would like to thank Rebecca Weiner for all her years of guidance and hard work. Also her wonderful Bat Mitzvah tutor, Elizheva Hurvich, her drash mentor Ben Lunine, and Ora Prochovnik for all the behind the scenes hard work. We also want to thank Cantor Sharon Bernstein for her love and support as well as Rabbi Camille Angel for her guidance.

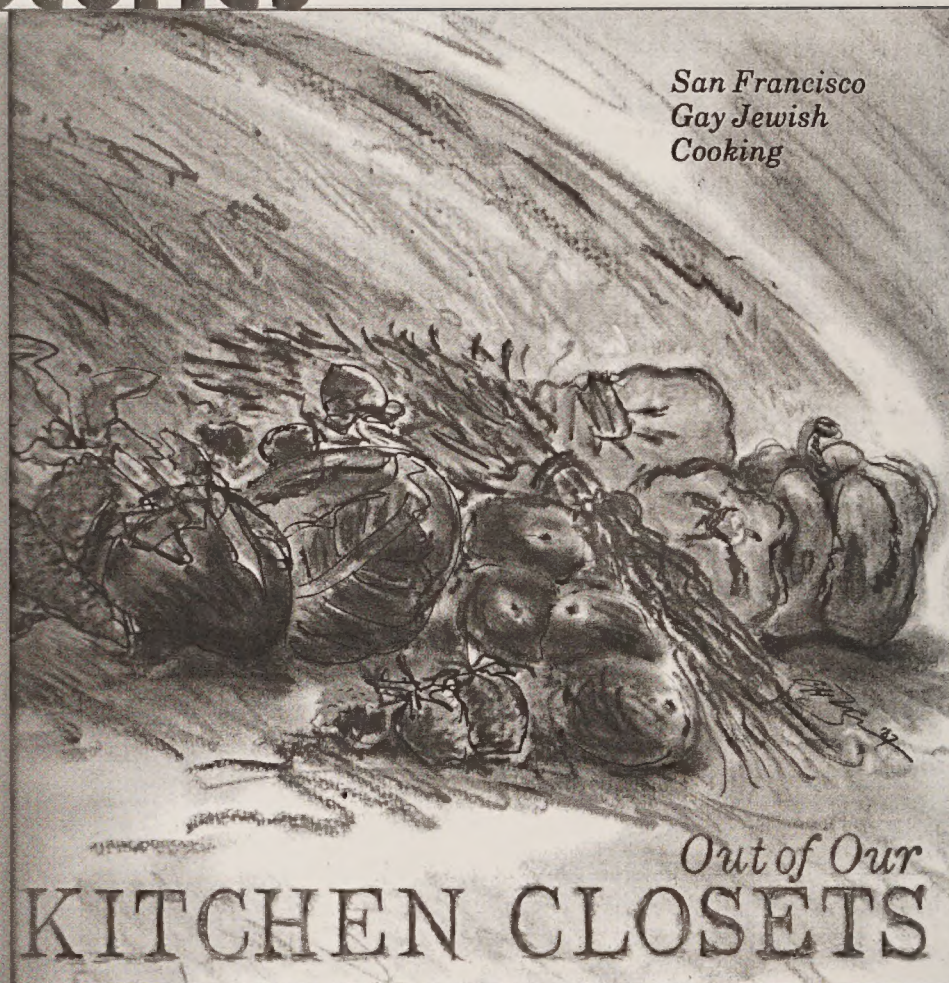
Recipes and Stories

BY SUSAN UNGER,
PROJECT COORDINATOR

It's incredible to think that 26 years have passed since our congregation published *Out of Our Kitchen Closets*, a cookbook subtitled "San Francisco Gay Jewish Cooking." A true labor of love by dozens of Congregation Sha'ar Zahav members, family, and friends, today the cookbook is, in many ways, a lovely time capsule of our congregation in 1987. It's also a showcase of the creativity and community spirit of our members—qualities that happily live on in our congregation today. Beyond just recipes, the cookbook features personal stories from many recipe contributors. It also features a hamish, humorous, and charming history of CSZ, authored by our wonderful member Batya Kalis, around the time of our congregation's 10th anniversary.

In the mid-80s, the AIDS epidemic had already had a devastating impact on our community. One of my primary inspirations for launching the cookbook project was to help mobilize the congregation to raise funds for the Food Bank of the San Francisco AIDS Foundation. Three dollars from the sale of each book was donated to them. One of the unexpected outcomes of the project was how it helped to connect (or re-connect) recipe contributors to their parents, grandparents, and other relatives. In search of family recipes, LGBT members whose relationships with their families may have been compromised for years often reported sharing warm memories and reigniting positive relationships. The cookbook has been out-of-print for a number of years. But beginning with this issue of the Forward, we will feature a recipe from the original cookbook along with an accompanying story. So 26 years later, it's high time to once again honor everyone who participated in the project, sharing their professional expertise and love of community. And as I concluded the cookbook Acknowledgements Section so many years ago: "Thanks to all the recipe contributors, testers, and tasters ... which will now, of course, include you. Enjoy!"

San Francisco
Gay Jewish
Cooking



108 ENTREES

CHICKEN GOLDA MEIR

Goldele got this recipe either from Ben Gurion, or from Chaim Weitzman, or from a Yemenite woman of great beauty who lived in Kibbutz K'far Blum. The versions vary...

8 chicken breast halves

1/2 cup flour
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon paprika
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder

1/2 cup vegetable oil

1 onion, sliced
1/4 pound mushrooms, sliced
1 1/2 cups chicken broth
1/2 cup vermouth
1/4 cup brandy
1/2 cup peach syrup

1/2 cup canned peach slices
1 orange, separated into segments or sliced

Serves 8

1 hour to prepare

Mike Rankin

- Mix the flour with the salt, paprika and garlic powder. Dust each chicken breast with the flour mixture.
- Heat the oil in a large frying pan and brown the chicken until golden. Remove to a plate.
- In the remainder of the oil, saute the onions and mushrooms. Add the broth, the vermouth, brandy and peach syrup.
- Return the chicken to the pan and cook over low heat for twenty minutes (or bake twenty minutes at 350 degrees.) Add the peach slices and orange segments and cook ten minutes longer, or until chicken is tender.
- Serve with rice and the sauce.

Sukkot

BY CANTOR SHARON BERNSTEIN

U*fros Aleinu Sukat Sh'lomecha*—Spread over us a shelter, a *sukkah* of your peace, of your wholeness. These words, nestled in the *Hashkiveinu* prayer recited every evening (at services and/or when we go to sleep), become a physical presence during the week of Sukkot. We build a *sukkah*, a temporary, fragile, structure, covered with branches and leaves, through which we can see the sky and the stars.

We don't have a space in which to build a *sukkah* at Sha'ar Zahav. This year, again considering the annual question of do we build a CSZ *sukkah*, and where, it occurred to me that Sha'ar Zahav *is* a *sukkah*. Our walls, our community, our minds, are open. We extend our hands and hearts to all friends, current and historic. We are constantly looking up and out and around, seeing the stars; contemplating, considering, and grappling with the infiniteness of it all.

As the annual harvest festival, Sukkot is also about celebrating abundance, about sharing and opening our fragile structures to everyone around us, of expressing our gratitude for all that we have, and of recognizing and acting upon the belief that where our buildings might be fragile, our human connections are strong, tangible, and ever-lasting.

This Sukkot, we'd like to invite everyone to consider what the Sukkot festival means, how we can strengthen the ties that bind us, how we can make our walls yet more open, how we can feel and express gratitude for the abundance in our lives. And we can think of various ways to chat, study, dance, sing and celebrate with the *Ushpizin* (historic figures) we would like at our festival.

Erev Sukkot is September 18th. Watch for an email with information about CSZ Sukkot happenings and resources like music, poems, ideas, and decorating tips.

School Begins

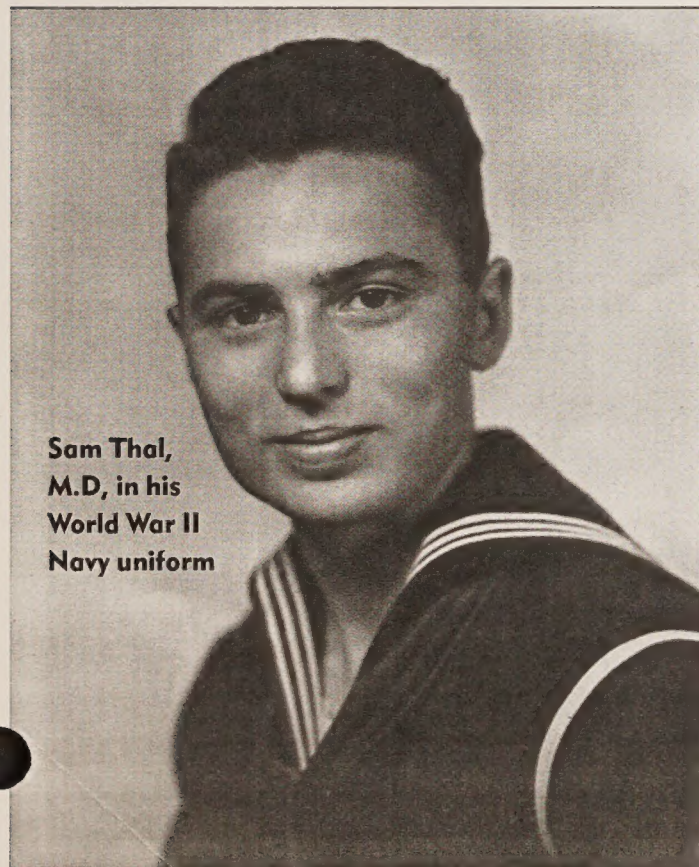
(continued from page 7)

Amirah Mizrah-Hebrew Teacher

Amirah Mizrah is an Oakland-based educator, poet, translator, and comics artist. Her work as a Jewish educator is rooted in her experience as a queer, Mizrahi, immigrant woman, which drives her intention to create loving and affirming space for her students of all genders and cultures. She has

been in Oakland for almost two years now, and is glad to be joining the community of Congregation Sha'ar Zahav in addition to her work teaching at Kehilla Community Synagogue. South Tel Aviv is her home and it is always in her heart.

I am looking forward to seeing you on Saturday, September 21st for our opening day of school.



Sam Thal,
M.D., in his
World War II
Navy uniform

SPECIAL SHABBAT HONORING OUR VETERANS

**Dr. Rob Daroff will be our speaker
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8**

On Friday, November 8, please join us for a special Shabbat service as we honor the veterans in our community. Regardless of how, when or where you served, we invite all Sha'ar Zahav members who are veterans to attend. We also urge all who have friends or family who are veterans to attend to this service.

Upcoming Programs

in September and October

Saturday, 9/7, 10:15 am Meditation Chavurah
Saturday, 9/7, 7 pm Havdallah Chavurah Honey cake
Bake-off and Write-on
Sunday, 9/8, 10 am Kever Avot v'Imahot – Our annual
visit to Sha'ar Zahav's cemetery
Wednesday, 9/11, 7 pm Va'ad meeting
Saturday, 9/21 Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer Shabbat classes begin
Sunday, 9/22 Family Sukkot Celebration

Wednesday, 9/25, 7 pm Simchat Torah celebration
Thursday, 9/26, 10 am Shemini Atzeret & Yizkor Service
Saturday, 10/5, 10:15 am Meditation Chavurah
Sunday, 10/20, 2 pm Chavurah Meet-up
Monday, 10/21, 7pm Journey to Judaism class begins
Friday, 10/25, 6 pm Friday Night Live for young families

Orthodox, Mizrahi and Gay in Israel *A Personal Story*

Thursday, October 10, 7:00 p.m.

What is it like to be young, part of a close-knit Orthodox Mizrahi family, and gay in Israel? As part of its ongoing series of events to promote dialogue and greater understanding, Sha'ar Zahav's Middle East Dialogue and Programming Committee (MEDPC) will screen the film *Say Amen* (*Tagid Amen*/דיגיד אמא), which sheds light on this question.

In *Say Amen*, film-maker David Deri tells his own sometimes difficult story of coming out to his large Moroccan-Israeli family – or rather, he turns the camera on his parents and siblings, who talk to him about sexual orientation and the importance of family, hoping that he will eventually marry a bride. David lives in two worlds, one his home in Tel Aviv and one his family's home in the small development town of Yeruham. The documentary was named one of the best five documentaries of 2005 by the Israeli Film Academy.

CSZ's free screening of *Say Amen* will be followed by discussion of the questions and issues the film raises.

Say Amen is just one of six thought-provoking and diverse programs on Israel or Israeli/Palestinian relations that MEDPC is tentatively planning between October and May 2014. These programs, which will present a variety of perspectives, will all include time for audience or small-group discussion.

CSZ's Middle East Dialogue and Programming Committee is committed to providing education on and increasing interest in topics related to Israel and Israeli/Palestinian relations, improving civil discourse, providing a safe environment for discussion of controversial subjects, and encouraging the expression of a diversity of views. For more information, please contact MEDPC Chair Terry Fletcher at gillianf19@gmail.com.

Pride Shabbat with Rabbi Rachel Adler

Covenant and Conversation

BY ANDREW RAMER

When the story is told of how Jewish women and queer Jews took our place at the table, that story will celebrate the work of Rabbi Rachel Adler, our Jeffrey A. Miller Scholar-in-Residence. Her 1971 article “The Jew Who Wasn’t There: Halacha and the Jewish Woman” was the first work published by a Jewish feminist, and her richly detailed 1999 book *Engendering Judaism* won a National Jewish Book Award.

Rabbi Adler, who teaches at Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles, was the guest of honor at our 9th Pride Seder and gave a drash during the service “Talking Their Way In: LGBTQ Jews Enter Jewish Tradition and Tell It A Thing Or Two.” Rabbi Adler discussed some of the ways in which queer Jews have contributed in the last decades, and how those contributions have benefitted the entire Jewish community. Her drash on Shabbat morning was an exploration of the week’s parasha in which Aaron’s son Pinchas murders a Midianite woman and an Israelite man who are having sex in the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. The Torah celebrates his zeal but Rabbi Adler shared

later texts that reveal the rabbis’ discomfort with the story. She also invited everyone up to look at the Torah, so that we could see one letter in the word Shalom, a *vav* written with a break in it—a reminder that zeal only brings a broken kind of peace.

Over lunch, Rabbi Adler took us on a journey into the traditional Jewish marriage, *Kiddushin*, whose terms are grounded in ancient Jewish property law. “Now that all of you can get married,” she asked, “is that the kind of marriage you want?” Then she walked us through her own *Brit Ahuvim*—Covenant of Lovers. Instead of one partner acquiring the other as in traditional Jewish marriages, her ceremony allows a couple to meet as equal partners in a sacred covenant. Her teaching led to a wonderful conversation on commitment, polyamory, and the ways in which we approach our most intimate relationships.

With quiet brilliance and empowering scholarship, Rabbi Adler gifted our community with her teachings and added to the many blessings of Pride Shabbat. If you missed the amazing opportunity to learn with her, you still have a chance to explore her work. And if you were there and haven’t read her yet, you have that to look forward to as well.

A Bat Mitzvah Experience

BY DELIA ANDERSON-COLSON

Congregation Sha’ar Zahav is a great place to become a bar or bat mitzvah. Though the process brings up many different emotions, Sha’ar Zahav can really change how a family feels about having a child become a b’nei mitzvah.

Before and during the process, we tend to feel scared or overwhelmed. When I was preparing, I was often nervous having to memorize prayers and read from the Torah in front of all my friends and family. Even six weeks before the big day, I was worried about not having enough time to learn every word. But through all of this it was really great to have two mentors who gave me their own personal horror stories of awkward gifts and embarrassing moments to remind me that being nervous was normal, that I was doing great, and that six weeks was *a lot* of time to memorize every word of the v’ahavta. Even if I didn’t always believe everything they said, it was nice to hear.

After the experience of becoming a b’nei mitzvah, we feel the freedom to ask more questions and be a bigger part of the

community. For example, “*Get involved with some ongoing tzedakah project or tikun olam project. Service lead with your mentor or another CSZ favorite. Consider signing up for another d’var torah/drash.*”-Rabbi Camille Angel.

We are given more opportunities to help out and be considered an adult in the community. Most of the time, it’s nice to relax and enjoy being a b’nei mitzvah before diving back into any big projects.

A lot of students also tend to feel relieved because we no longer have to go to Hebrew school once or twice a week. We may feel happy because all of our family, friends, and mentors joined us to celebrate our b’nei mitzvahs.

And we may feel free because we are now adults in some ways. Any of these can bring feelings of happiness to a recent b’nei mitzvah and to her or his family.

All of our feelings—whether of impending doom or of freedom—impact our lives and feelings about Sha’ar Zahav. We are all lucky to have such a supportive and helpful congregation, especially during the process of becoming a bar or bat mitzvah.

Bikkur Cholim Fund

Rose Katz to the Chevra Kadisha in memory of her mother, Sadie Katz.

Florence & Steven Nacamulli, Chevra Kadisha in honor of Andrea Guerra's milestone birthday.

Cantor's Discretionary Fund

Aya Betensky & Robert Kraut in appreciation of the five months of lovely, inspiring music and services.

Karen Schiller

The Rabbi Julius & Pearl Funk Musical Event Fund

James Carlson in honor of Batya Kalis. in memory of Rosalie Lynette.

Jonathan Funk & John Arnold in memory of Mildred Brown.

Kelly Thiemann

General Fund

James Carlson in memory of Coleman Halloran.

In memory of David Robinson's father.

Steven Elman in memory of his father, Hyman Elman, and his grandmother, Dora Elman.

Jo Ellen Green Kaiser & David Kaiser in honor of Batya Kalis.

Batya Kalis in appreciation of Cantor Bernstein and Rabbi Angel.

Judith & Steven Lipson in honor of Cantor Sharon Bernstein's music performed at the Holocaust Survivors Fund event.

Andrew Parker-Rose & Flavio Epstein in honor of their son Elias Leon Rose on his graduation from middle school.

Jeffrey Piade & Martin Tilzer in honor of Batya Kalis's 90th birthday.

Richard Meyerson in memory of Eileen Lynette's mother.

Mark Pressler in honor of Batya Kalis' 90th birthday.

Ora Prochovnick & Rena Frantz in memory of John E. Ross.

Barry Schmell in memory of his father, Abraham Schmell.

Yo Schneeman in memory of her mother, Marika Chill.

Deborah Udin & Lucy Cefalu

High Holiday Pledges

Claudia Bernard & Howard Herman
Nancy Levin

Library Fund

Neil Hart in memory of Syd Feldman

Phyllis Mintzer Education Fund

Sue Bojdak in honor of the Bar Mitzvah of Rafi Lubeck-Weiner.

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

Congregation Beth El in honor of Batya Kalis

Avraham Giannini

Neil Hart in memory of his mother, Peggy Hart.

Jonathan Pannor in memory of William E. Valentine, on his 19th yahrzeit.

Julye & Mark Rose, Jennifer & Steve Paul, Liz & Ari Rubinstein, Janet & Bernard Rubinstein, & Leigh Ann Winick & Sam Pinkus—great-nieces of **Batya Kalis**—in honor of Batya's 90th birthday.

Karen Schiller

Kelly Thiemann

Miriam Trentman & Robert Morelli

Judith Wolfe in memory of Janice Thiemann, Kelly Thiemann's mother.

Rainbow Fund

Susan Belau & Jonathan Crosby

Wayne Bender

Claudia Bernard & Howard Herman

Robert Bernardo

Donna Blow & Nancy Muller

Diana Buchbinder & Jeane Redsecker

Patricia Caplan & Jonathan Simonoff

James Carlson in honor of Tony Harris & Erika Katske.

Helen Cohen & Mark Lipman

Michael Chertok

Daniel Chesir

Ellie Cohen & Michal Goralsky in honor of Ron Lezell.

Kelly Cytron & Judy Hogan

Ann Daniels & Jonathan Zingman

Robert Daroff

Ron Edelman in memory of his dear sister, Evelyn Slenker.

Steven Elman

Andrew Fyne & Richard Mikles

Avraham Giannini

Joan Goldman

Bob Katz

Rose Katz in honor of Batya Kalis

Janet Klein & Lisa Ann DiGirolamo

Ida Kuluk

The Lahn-Schroeder Family in honor of the Congregation's 36th anniversary.

Tom Lakritz & Chris Wagner

Shoshana Levenberg & Andrea Guerra in honor of Barbara Guerra & Marion Levenberg

Jeffrey Lilly in honor of Rabbi Angel

Susan Lubeck & Richard Weiner

Mark Mackler & Wendell Choo

Alan Michels & Laureen Kim

Florence & Steven Nacamulli in loving memory of Aaron & Noah Nacamulli, Don Eiten, and Allen Harris.

The Reiser-Shorofsky Family

Sharyn Saslafsky

Arthur Slepian & Gerry Llamado

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Dana Vinicoff

Julia Weber & Charles Fineberg

Rebecca Weiner

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Judith Wolfe in honor of Rabbi Angel.

Michael Zimmerman

Lydia & David Zinn

Ami Zusman

**CONGREGATION
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NOVEMBER 9, 2013**

Let's celebrate our fabulous 36 years with a fabulous party. Join your friends at CSZ for an evening of socializing, food, drinks, entertainment and dancing.

Veronica Klaus and the Tammy Hall Trio will set the cabaret atmosphere. Whether you dress up or dress down, this "friend raiser" promises to be a blast.

Thank you to these generous sponsors

June 7-8

Oneg sponsored by Eileen Lynette *in memory of her mother, Rosalie Lynette*. Flowers sponsored by the Congregation in honor of Batya Kalis.

June 14-15

Flowers and Saturday kiddish luncheon sponsored by the family of Rafi Lubeck-Weiner *in honor of his bar mitzvah*.

Oneg sponsored by Lisa Szer *in memory of her father, Chaim Szer*.

June 21-22

Oneg sponsored by the Reiser Shorofsky Family *in honor of Rabbi Angel and Cantor Bernstein*

June 28-29

Flowers sponsored by Karen Schiller *with gratitude to the congregation*.

Oneg sponsored by KESHET (Working for the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Jews in Jewish life).

Saturday luncheon sponsored by The Jeffrey A. Miller Scholar in Residence Fund.

July 5-6

Flowers arranged and donated by Jan Haber.

July 12-13

Oneg sponsored by Martin Tannenbaum and Alex Ingersoll *in celebration of three fabulous new members: Brad, Abby and Bryan*

July 19-20

Oneg sponsored by Barbara Cymrot *"in memory of my dear dad, Marty" (Martin Cymrot)*.

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Our Legacy Community

To the 75 of our members and friends who have sent us a signed Letter of Intent to leave a bequest to CSZ - thank you so much. Taking this action is a vital part of guaranteeing the future security of our congregation - a community that has grown and matured over the past 36 years. It is a community that we want to see thrive well into the future. To those who haven't yet taken this step - please read Avraham Giannini's story. I hope you are as inspired as I am by his honesty and passion.

If you are inspired - please drop me an e-mail: irene.ogus@gmail.com and ask me for the form to make your own bequest. It is a simple form and will take two minutes to complete!

I am pleased to share with you that I have been asked by the Jewish Community Federation to meet with the boards of other synagogues and agencies that are envious of the success of our legacy program.

Your commitment to the future of Sha'ar Zahav has been recognized

across the Bay Area as a model of devotion and love.

Many more stories will appear in future editions of the Forward. They are poignant and heartfelt and full of gratitude for what this congregation means to each writer. Please show us what CSZ means to you - ask me for the form!

Irene Ogus
Chair
Our Legacy Community

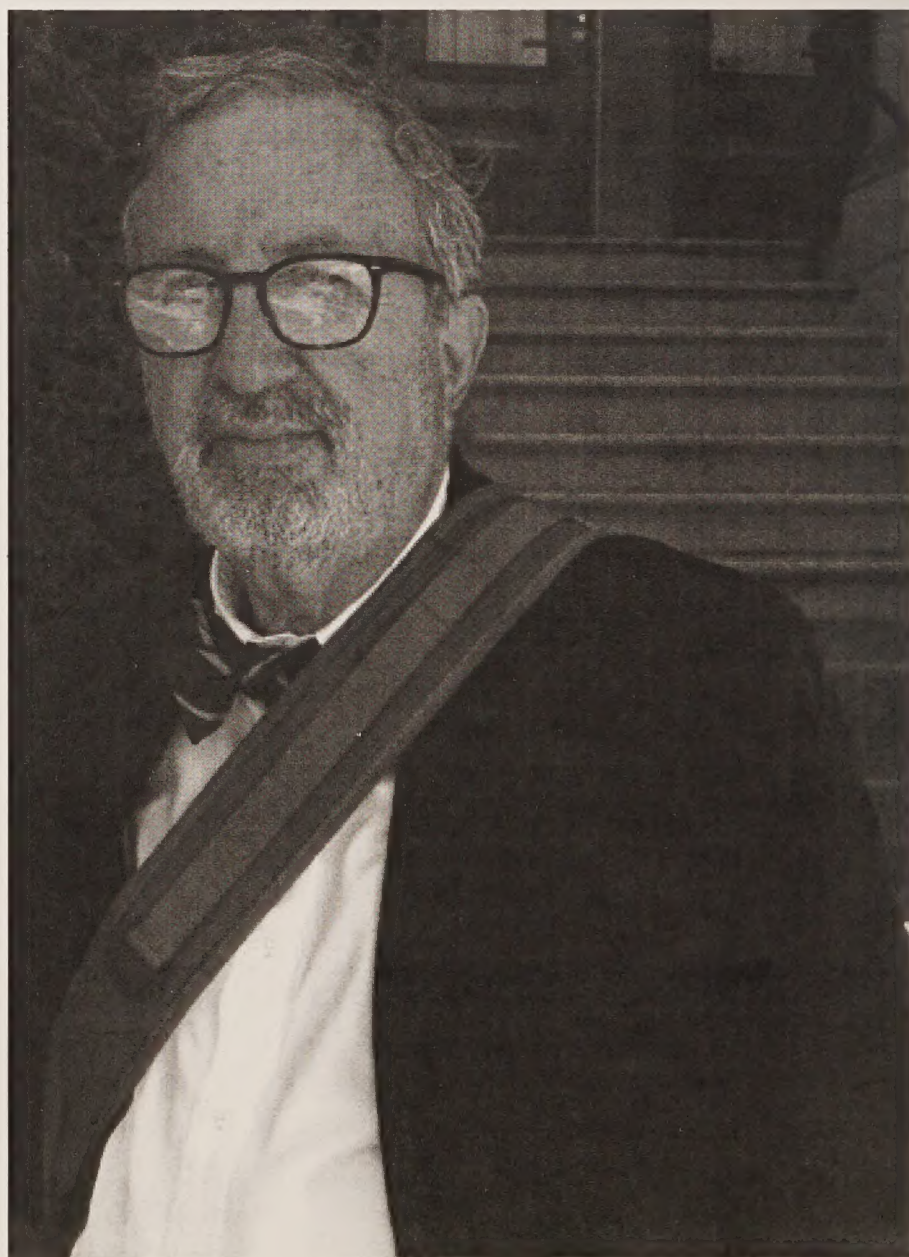
My Story

BY AVRAHAM GIANNINI, M.D

I first read about Congregation Sha'ar Zahav in 1977. I vividly recall the very day there was an article in the San Francisco Chronicle. It was such a powerful statement: a beacon to gay men. I could be honest about being homosexual and be religious at the same time. I grew up in an Italian Catholic family, and I was very active as a Catholic, even going to Lourdes yearly with groups. With my divorce and remarriage in 1983, there was no honest room for me. When I came out as a gay man in 1989 the room was not even an option.

For years I had been attracted to the Jewish world: my father's closest friends were Jews. His ancestors included anti clerical Italian Masons, as well as Protestant Masons from England. Dr. Mike Rankin led Shabbat services at a "California Men's Gathering" in Santa Cruz. At that time he invited me to Congregation Sha'ar Zahav on Danvers Street. Rabbi Yoel Kahn welcomed me and the rest is history.

Congregation Sha'ar Zahav represented a gay community with integrity matched with our ancient ongoing religious and activist kavanah - directing our hearts to God. This beacon continues to draw me toward a heritage of integrity and true holiness: my soul ("alma" in Italian) continues to come home here. I have included Sha'ar Zahav in my will so that this beacon will continue to light a bright path for all men and women, especially when those individuals feel out of step with their more traditional families.



Naches

Mazel tov to Al Baum who was selected to be the lifetime achievement Grand Marshal for the 2013 Pride Parade!

Mazel Tov to Rafi Lubeck Weiner on his bar mitzvah

Condolences

Our condolences to

Paul Peninger on the death of his father, John E. Ross

Eve Meyer on the death of her sister-in-law, Paula Meyer

Jonathan Zimman on the death of his father, Barry Zimman

Howard Hahn on the death of his friend, Helga Henius

Steve Shotland on the death of his aunt, Thelma Greene

The family and friends of Sarah Comerchero, a former co-leader

Member Yahrzeits

September

- 1 John Golebowski
- 3 Lee Gierson
- 5 Frances Pechter
- 6 Elliot Klein
- 11 Daniel McGoldrick
- 15 David Pierce
- 18 Penny Dachinger
- 20 Edward Wolberg
- 25 Jeffrey Lewis Cohen

October

- 3 Rabbi Benjamin Marcus
- 6 Jeffrey Miller
- 8 Duane Kearns Puryear
- 12 Andrew Zysman
- 13 Harry Clint Bigglestone
- 18 Henry Mautner
- 24 Glenn Murray Miller
- 29 Michael Mohr

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New location for Congregation Sha'ar Zahav's High Holy Day Services



5774 High Holy Days with Congregation Sha'ar Zahav

Please join us again for the High Holy Days:

Wednesday, September 4

Erev Rosh Hashanah

Thursday, September 5

Rosh Hashanah

Friday, September 6

Rosh Hashanah, 2nd day (@ CSZ)

Friday, September 13

Erev Yom Kippur, Kol Nidre

Saturday, September 14

Yom Kippur

Services will be held at

San Francisco Scottish Rite Masonic Center

2850 19th Avenue (at Sloat)

San Francisco, CA 94132